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ABSTRACT

Although the research in teacher-librarianship provides evidence for decision-making in the design of appropriate education programs for teacher-librarians and effective school resource centers, the research base is not necessarily reflected in programs of education for teacher-librarians. This paper provides a definition of the terms "Teacher-Librarian" (TL) and "resource center," and surveys the literature on teacher- librarianship, focusing on (1) teaching qualifications and successful classroom experience; (2) personal characteristics and qualities; (3) educational program; and (4) practicum. Many studies indicate that TLs require prior teaching experience to be effective. Important factors affecting TL involvement in curricular issues include the principal's attitude towards the TL's role; teacher preference for TLs with previous teaching experience; the number of support staff; and degree of teacher understanding of the role of the TL and the potential of the resource center. Cooperative program planning and teaching skills are important. Teacher-librarians need to take an active part in defining and communicating their role more effectively to principals and teachers. While the TL profession has developed national and international guidelines for the education of teacher-librarians, systematic and cooperative effort for implementation and change has been lacking. Provides nine recommendations for effective teacher-librarian education. (Contains 53 references.) (SWC)

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Teacher-Librarianship: Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice

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The research in education and library and information studies, and specifically teacher-librarianship, provides evidence for decision-making in the design of appropriate education programs for teacher-librarians and effective school resource centers (see, for example, Hay-cock, 1992); nevertheless, the research base is not necessarily reflected in programs of education for teacher-librarians. There exists in our profession the peculiar situation whereby the individuals who provide the profession with the research do not in fact apply it.

The terms teacher-librarian and resource center are used here as these are common in many parts of the world. A teacher-librarian is a qualified teacher with successful classroom teaching experience and additional post-baccalaureate education in teacher-librarianship. The teacher-librarian performs a unified role, uniquely combining teacher and librarian, and may work full-time or part-time in the school resource center. The term resource center is similarly used for consistency; the resource center houses the school's collection of curriculum resources, including information books and other media and imaginative literature; these are coherently and consistently organized for physical access and the teacher-librarian plans with classroom teachers to develop and implement programs which assure intellectual access by increasingly independent student learners.

There is a positive relationship between the level of school resource center service available and student scholastic achievement. In schools with good resource centers and the services of a teacher-librarian (TL), students perform significantly better on tests for basic research skills, including locational skills, outlining and notetaking, and the knowledge and use of reference materials, including the use of a dictionary and an encyclopedia (Becker, 1970; Callison, 1979/1980; Greve, 1974/1975; McMillen, 1965/1966; Nolan, 1989/1990; Yarling, 1968/1969); they also perform significantly better in the area of reading comprehension and in their ability to express ideas effectively concerning their readings (Yarling, 1968/1969). Indeed, among school and community predictors of academic achievement, the size of the resource center staff and collection is second only to the absence of at-risk conditions, particularly poverty and low educational attainment among adults (Lance, Welborn & Hamilton-Pennell, 1993), and of four other factors that predict student achievement--school resource center collection size; school resource center expenditure; public library collection size; public library expenditure--the greatest predictor is school resource center collection size (Greve, 1974/1975). (This brief introductory research summary was reported in Haycock, 1994.)

These gains are not realized in all school library situations and circumstances, however. First, the role of the teacher-librarian requires clarification if there is to be any improvement in existing resource center programs (Charter, 1982). Principals, teachers and teacher-librarians themselves have many misconceptions about the role of the TL in the instructional program (Bias, 1979/1980; Burcham, 1989/1990; Hambleton, 1980; Hodson, 1978; Jones, 1977/1978; Kerr, 1975/1976; Kim, 1981/1982; Olson, 1966) such that states and school districts need to provide a clearer role definition (Markle, 1982).

The development of student competence is most effective when integrated with classroom instruction through cooperative program planning and team teaching by two equal teaching partners--the classroom teacher and the teacher-librarian (Callison, 1979/1980). Minimal gains in research and study skills can be achieved through instruction by the classroom teacher alone or the teacher-librarian alone (Nolan, 1989/1990). Effective instruction depends on the cooperative effort of both teacher and TL; stated another way, scheduled library skills classes taught solely by the TL are not as effective as integrated, cooperatively planned and taught programs (Smith, 1978/1979). Indeed, not only do flexibly scheduled resource centers provide greater academic benefits, but students themselves believe that the resource center is more useful in their school work than students in scheduled schools (Hodson, 1978; Nolan, 1989/1990). When flexibly scheduled, the TL and resource center can have a significant effect on student achievement in the handling and use of information and in academic content areas. Indeed, the most significant changes in library programs occur when the teacher-librarian moves to flexible scheduling and curriculum-integrated instruction;

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positive cooperative relations with teachers, administrators and students contribute to this success (Bishop, 1992/1993).

Teaching Qualifications and Successful Classroom Experience

Many studies indicate that teacher-librarians require teaching qualifications and classroom experience prior to further education and training as a TL in order to be effective. Exemplary teacher-librarians, as identified in the professional literature and by exemplary principals, display the traits of exemplary teachers as well, they plan with teachers, use flexible and innovative teaching and public relations approaches, teach well, provide continuous access, design flexible policies, and develop collections which support the curriculum (Alexander, 1992). Prior successful teaching experience is necessary for TLs to perceive and solve instructional problems (Van Dreser, 1971). More years of classroom teaching experience and more preparation in curriculum development and implementation are needed than is currently the case (Corr, 1979). School superintendents, principals and teachers, for example, consistently point to the need for teacher-librarians to have more classroom teaching experience if programs are to develop in a credible and successful way (Wilson, 1972/1973). Superintendents go so far as to believe that the teaching background of the teacher-librarian may be too limited for the TL to be effective (Connors, 1984).

It is difficult to imagine why teacher-librarians are not involved in cooperative program planning and team teaching with classroom colleagues as equal teaching partners to the extent that principals, teachers and teacher-librarians themselves believe that they should be (Corr, 1979; Johnson, 1975; Kerr, 1975/1976; Stanwich, 1982). If the teacher uses the resource center and consults with the TL about planning student work, then the use of the resource center is greater (Hartley, 1980/1981). In fact, students rate schools more highly when there is agreement and communication among principals, teachers and TLs regarding program objectives, and where there is planned, consistent and integrated instruction in resource center use (Scott, 1982). Important factors which affect TL involvement in curricular issues include the principal's attitude towards the TL's role, teacher preference for TLs with successful classroom teaching experience and a teacher's frame of reference, the number of support staff, and degree of teacher understanding of the role of the TL and the potential of the resource center (Corr, 1979). Where teacher-librarians have prior classroom teaching experience they value guiding principles for effective practice more than those TLs without prior classroom experience (Coleman, 1982/1983).

Interestingly, the number of teacher-librarians with classroom teaching experience actually declined between 1970 and 1980 in some states (Gast, 1984).

Personal Characteristics and Qualities

The implementation of cooperative program planning and teaching, with flexible scheduling, what the research identifies as the cornerstones of effective programs, requires specific personal qualities; if one accepts this premise, then these need to be identified in prospective candidates for programs of education for teacher-librarians or developed within the program. Cooperative program planning and teaching as an instructional development activity, for example, requires more social interaction with other teachers than is required of other roles of the TL yet there is a low level of communication between teachers and TLs (Burks, 1993/1994; Urbanik, 1984/1985): one might conclude that teacher-librarians need education and training in social interaction skills (Kerr, 1975/1976).

Teacher-librarians in exemplary resource centers are extroverted and independent: as leaders they have "tough poise" (Charter, 1982). Teacher-librarians who are less cautious and more extroverted than their colleagues tend to be more successful; indeed, the best pair of predictors of high circulation of materials in the resource center is high extroversion and a high degree of curriculum involvement by the TL (Madaus, 1974/1975).

Both teachers and TLs believe that more individual contact and informal discussion will result in increased teacher use of the TL and resource center (Johnson, 1975).
TLs who place a higher priority on personal relations offer more services to teachers and students; TLs who rate personal relations as a lower priority spend more time on circulation and related tasks (Adams, 1973).

Leadership qualities are also consistently detailed in studies of effective teacher-librarians (Johnson, 1993/1994; Yetter, 1994). More successful TLs similarly demonstrate personal stamina

and energy and risk-taking, as well as enthusiasm for cooperative program planning and teaching and flexible scheduling (Yetter, 1994). Initiative, confidence and communication skills are also proven attributes for success (Johnson, 1993/1994).

Educational Program

For almost thirty years there has been disagreement between school personnel and library school personnel regarding whether the teacher-librarian is a teacher or a librarian such that educational programs have not reflected the priorities of educators (Evraiff, 1969/1970)). It is now generally accepted that TLs need to take an active part in defining their role, particularly in cooperative program planning and teaching, and need to communicate their role more effectively to principals and teachers, through in-service programs and through an emphasis on work with people more than management and production processes (Bechtel, 1975; Bias, 1979/1980; Pichette, 1975/1976; Sullivan, 1977/1979).

Teacher-librarians could play a much more distinctive teacher role (Kuhne, 1993/1994) but education programs need to place more emphasis on the teaching/learning process (Kosters, 1986/1987). Perhaps most importantly, teacher-librarians require extensive training in cooperative program planning and team teaching which builds on prior successful classroom teaching experience. Programs which educate teacher-librarians would do well to structure programs around cooperative program planning and teaching and the skills necessary to convince educators that TLs are vital partners in instruction (Royal, 1981/1982).

Recent studies have examined the role of the teacher-librarian as a change agent and as part of the school culture. Taking information technology as but one innovation requiring a leadership role for the teacher-librarian, four diffusion-related roles were identified in the implementation-change agent, innovator, opinion leader, monitor (Forrest, 1993/1994). If these roles and responsibilities are essential for successful teacher-librarians surely they warrant prominent and specific attention in education programs.

It has long been recognized that TLs need to organize more in-service training for colleagues (Callison, 1979/1980; Hartley, 1980/1981). Although the content of the in-service program has changed over time, from the introduction to newer media and technologies to collaboration and information problem solving, the need for training in providing in-service programs for faculty (Kosters, 1986/1987) has remained constant. Teacher-librarians can and must, for example, teach the principles of cooperative program planning and teaching to others (Yetter, 1994). This can be done at the local school level or at the school district level where teachers and TLs can best learn cooperative program planning and teaching together (Giorgis, 1994).

The teacher-librarian also acts as a resource person for teachers (Kosters, 1986/1987); some call this instructional consultation while others prefer to see it as part of an equal collaboration with teaching colleagues. Regardless of the label, however, acting a s a "resource person" requires special skills in human relations, consulting and adult teaching.

Teacher-librarians require the social and technical skills of collaboration, of communicating effectively and advocating for programs and resources, of educating colleagues in cooperative program planning and resource-based learning and of team teaching. These should form the core of an appropriate education program, with other knowledge, skills and attitudes developed around these fundamental role descriptors. At even the most basic level educators of TLs need to revise programs to include courses which foster cooperation and understanding between teachers and TLs (Hartley, 1980/1981; Royal, 1981/1982).

There is also some evidence that teacher-librarians educated at the graduate level provide a wider range of services for teachers and students than do those educated at the undergraduate level (Wert, 1970).

Practicum

More than other types of librarians, teacher-librarians have field experiences and supervised practicum opportunities; the competencies related to cooperative program planning and team teaching, however, tend not to be supervised in practica to the extent that other competencies are (Royal, 1981/1982). Indeed, the practicum does not typically reflect the professional competencies being developed in educational programs but rather clerical and technical tasks assigned by the supervising librarian (Rupert, 1970).

Conclusions and Recommendations

If the implementation of change in schools is slow, it can be glacial in tertiary institutions; further, each institution has its own unique academic, social and organizational culture. While the profession has developed national standards for education for teacher-librarians (see, for example, Haycock, 1982) as well as guidelines at the international level (Hannesdottir, in press) and these have had some positive effect (see, for example, Amey, 1992), there has not been the ongoing, systematic and collaborative effort between practitioners and academics essential to implementation and change. Nevertheless, the scholarly research supporting the profession of teacher-librarianship, points to several considerations for effective programs of education for teacher-librarians.

Recommendations

1. Applicants for programs of education for teacher-librarians should have professional preparation and successful classroom teaching experience prior to entry. This seemingly contentious issue in some jurisdictions is supported by research in program effectiveness, in teacher-librarian effectiveness and in perception studies with teachers, principals and school principals. To continue to ignore this prerequisite ignores research in both impact on programs and achievement and on decision makers and resource allocators.
2. Personal attributes such as initiative, independence, extroversion, personal stamina, self-confidence should be considered in the selection of candidates for education programs in teacher-librarianship.
3. Personal attributes and skills such as leadership, communication and social interaction, and ease in personal relations should be considered in the selection of candidates for education programs in teacher-librarianship and built into the program as specific competencies or skill sets and as courses.
4. Cooperative program planning and teaching, the commitment and skills to work with classroom colleagues to integrate information problem solving skills in collaborative teaching programs, should be central to any program of education for teacher-librarians. This role development needs to acknowledge and build on the teacher education and classroom experience that the prospective teacher-librarian brings to the program. Other competencies in the selection, organization and management of resources should support this central program element rather than be seen simply as separate program elements.
5. The ability to specify and articulate information problem solving skills and strategies at various developmental levels and in different subject contexts is necessary for the teacher-librarian to be a credible resource person and teaching colleague.
6. Knowledge of adult learning theory and the skills of instructional design and leading in-service programs for teaching colleagues is essential to the implementation of resource-based learning programs; experience in leading in-service programs should be built into education programs.
7. School libraries and teacher-librarians will survive and thrive in the twenty-first century only if educators understand their importance in the educational enterprise. The knowledge, skills and commitment to program advocacy to convince educators that TLs are vital partners in instruction should be a critical component of education programs.
8. Practicum experiences for TLs can be useful if designed to educate, train and support higher level activities such as cooperative program planning and teaching and management rather than clerical routines, as is too often the case.
9. Continuing education opportunities provided by graduate programs in teacher-librarianship should model the priorities and collaboration that should be evident in education programs.

Teacher-librarianship is part of the information professions; there is a rich and sustained body of research to inform professional practice; this research was largely conducted by, or under the supervision of, educators of teacher-librarians. Surely if one expects teacher-librarians to value and act on the research of their profession, one can expect no less from the academics and scholars who conducted the research in the first place and who now act as the professional gateway to the profession.

While this research was conducted largely in North America and while the evidence does not reflect the strongly held beliefs of some school library leaders and school library educators, there is little evidence supporting a contrary position.

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